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Songs of the Prairie

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SONGS OF THE PRAIRIE

SONGS OF THE PRAIRIE

BY

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GAY AND HANCOCK, LTD.

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THE PRAIRIE

THE City? Oh yes, the City
Is a good enough place for a while
It fawns on the clever and witty,
And welcomes the rich with a smile ;
It lavishes money as water,
It boasts of its palace and hall,
But the City is only the daughter—
The Prairie is mother of all !

The City is all artificial,
Its life is a fashion-made fraud,
Its wisdom, though learned and judicial,
Is far from the wisdom of God ;
Its hope is the hope of ambition,
Its lust is the lust to acquire,
And the larger it grows, its condition
Sinks lower in pestilent mire.

The City is cramped and congested,
The haunt and the covert of crime ;
The Prairie is broad, unmolested,
It points to the high and sublime ;
Where only the sky is above you,
And only the distance in view,
With no one to jostle or shove you—
It's there a man learns to be true !

Where the breeze whispers over the willows,
Or sighs in the dew-laden grass,
And the rain-clouds, like big, stormy billows,
Besprinkle the land as they pass ;
With the smudge-fire alight in the distance,
The wild-duck alert on the stream,
Where life is a psalm of existence,
And opulence only a dream.

Where wide as the plan of creation
The Prairies stretch ever away,
And beckon a broad invitation
To fly to their bosom, and stay ;
The prairie-fire smell in the gloaming—
The water-wet wind in the spring—
An empire untrod for the roaming—
Ah, this is a life for a king !

When peaceful and pure as a river
They lie in the light of the moon,
You know that the Infinite Giver
Is stringing your spirit a-tune ;
That life is not told in the telling,
That death does not whisper adieu,
And deep in your bosom up-welling,
You know that the Promise is true !

To those who have seen it and smelt it,
To those who have loved it alone,
To those who have known it and felt it—
The Prairie is ever their own ;
And far though they wander, unwary,
Far, far from the breath of the plain,
A thought of the wind on the Prairie
Will set their blood rushing again.

Then you to the City who want it,
Go, grovel its gain-glutted streets,
Be one of the ciphers that haunt it,
Or sit in its opulent seats ;
But for me, where the Prairies are reaching
As far as the vision can scan—
Ah, that is the prayer and the preaching
That goes to the heart of a man !

THE PLOUGH

WHAT power is this that stands behind the
steel?—

A homely implement of blade and wheel—
Neglected by the margin of the way,
And flashing back the blaze of dying day ;
Or dragging slow across the yellow field
In silent prophecy of lavish yield,
It marks the pace of innocence and toil,
And taps the boundless treasure of the soil.

Before you came the red-man rode the plain,
Untitled lord of Nature's great domain ;
The shaggy herds, knee-deep in mellow grass,
The lazy summer hours were wont to pass ;
The wild-goose nested by the water-side ;
The red deer roamed upon the prairie wide ;
The black bear trod the woods in solemn might ;
The lynx stole through the bushes in the night.

No sound of toil was heard in all the land ;
No joyous laugh of voice or sharp command ;
No cloud of smoke from iron funnels thrown
Was through the autumn hazes gently blown ;
No edge of steel tore up the virgin sod ;
No church its shining finger turned to God ;
No tradesman laboured over bench and tool ;
No children chattered on their way to school.

But all the land lay desolate and bare,
Its wealth of plain, its forest riches rare
Ungessed by those who saw it through their tears,
And Nature—miser of a thousand years—
Was adding still to her immense reserve
That shall supply the world with brawn and nerve :
But all lay silent, useless, and unused,
And useless 'twas because it was unused.

You came. Straightway the silent plain
Grew mellow with the glow of golden grain ;
The axes in the solitary wood
Rang out where stately oak and maple stood ;
The land became alive with busy din,
And as the many settled, more came in ;
The world looked on in wonder and dismay—
The building of a nation in a day !

By lake and river, rock and barren waste,
A peaceful army toiled in eager haste ;
Ten thousand workers sweating in the sun
Pressed on the task so recently begun ;
Their outworks every day were forced ahead—
And every day they gave their toll of dead—
Until at length the double lines of steel
Received the steaming steed and whirling wheel !

Where yesterday the lazy bison lay
A city glitters in the sun to-day ;
His paths are turned to streets of wood and stone,
And thousands tread the way he trod alone ;
The mighty hum of industry and trade
Fills all the place where once he held parade,
And far away the unheard river's play
Makes joyous night still brighter than the day !

Upon the plains a thousand towns arise,
And quickly each to be a city tries ;
The sound of trade is heard on every hand,
And sturdy men rise to possess the land ;
Awhile they lingered, thinking it a dream,
But now they flow in a resistless stream
That seems to fill the prairie far and near,
Yet in its vastness soon they disappear.

Where once the silent red-man spurned the ground
A land of peace and plenty now is found,
A land by Nature destined to be great,
Where every man is lord of his estate ;
Where men may dwell together in accord,
And honest toil receive its due reward ;
Where loyal friends and happy homes are made,
And culture follows hard the feet of trade.

This you have made it : Is it vain to hope
The sons of such a land will climb and grope
Along the undiscovered ways of life,
And neither seek nor be found shunning strife,
But ever, beckoned by a high ideal,
Press onward, upward, till they make it real ;
With feet sure planted on their native sod,
And will and aspirations linked with God ?

THE MOTHERING

I HAD lain untrod for a million years from the
line to the Arctic sea ;
I had dreamed strange dreams of the vast un-
known,
Of the lispng wind and the dancing zone
Where the Northland fairies' feet had flown,
And it all seemed good to me.

At the close of a thousand æons of sleep came a
pang that was strange to me ;
The pang of a new life in my breast,
The swell of a vast and a vague unrest,
And it thrilled my soul from East to West
As it fluttered to be free.

But I steeled my heart to the biped thing ; of vast
presumption he :
He would lure my lonely thoughts away,

He would sport himself on the sacred clay
Where the dust of the prehistoric lay ;
 But he scorned the soul of me.

So I stretched my plains for a thousand leagues from
 the mountains to the sea ;
But he rolled them back with a steel-laid line,
And he crumbled space by man's design,
And he filled his life with the breath of mine ;
 But his love he gave not me.

Then I called him foes from the farthest north and
 the snowflake fluttered free ;
But he took him trees I had given birth,
And he delved him coal from my bowels of earth,
And he laughed at me as he sat in mirth ;
 But he cursed the cold of me.

Then I cut him off from his fellow-men that his
 thought might turn to me ;
But he strung him a line of copper thread,
And his fire-shod words swung overhead,
By the fiend of air his thought was spread
 O'er hill, and plain, and lea.

Then I gave him hopes he could not define and fears
that he could not flee ;
And he heard my cry in the long, still night,
In my spirit-thrall I held him tight,
And his blind soul-eyes craved for the light ;
But the light he could not see.

So I held my peace till I saw him sit with children
at his knee ;
And I sent them the sun, the wind and the rain,
And the ferny slope and the flowery plain,
And the wet night-smell of the growing grain ;
And their love they gave to me.

In the last race-birth of the sons of men a travail
holdeth me :
But out of the night of pain and tears
A new life comes with the rolling years ;
And I fondle the child of my hope and fears,
And it seemeth good to me.

HUSTLIN' IN MY JEANS

YES, I'm holdin' down the homestead here an'
roughin' it a bit,

It seems the only kind o' life that I was built to fit,
For it's thirty years last summer since I staked my
first preserve,

An' I reckon on the whole I've prospered more than
I deserve ;

An' my friends kep' naggin' at me for to quit this toil
an' strife

An' to settle in the city for the balance of my life,
An' I ain't compelled to labour—I've cached a wad
of beans—

But I'm happier when I'm hustlin' on the homestead
in my jeans.

I've tried to loaf an' like it, an' I've tried to swell
about

Where the boozey run to red-eye an' the greedy run
to gout,

An' I've tried to wear a collar an' a fancy fly-net
vest,
An' I've tried to think it pleasant just to sit around
an' rest ;
An' I've mingled with the nabobs an' hee-hawed with
other guys
That were just as sick as I was of a life of livin' lies ;
I've mingled in society an' peeked behind the scenes—
An' I'm happier when I'm hustlin' on the homestead
in my jeans.

Then I got the lust for roamin' an' I rummaged round
the earth,
An' I got a big experience an' correspondin' girth,
But the more I roved an' rambled the less I cared to
live,
An' I only kep' on goin' cause I'd no alternative ;
I learned through tips an' tickets an' the jostle of the
cars
That I wouldn't trade a homestead for a continent in
Mars ;
An' I bid good-bye to Fashion an' her social kings
an' queens,
An' I filed my second homestead an' I bought a pair
of jeans.

'Course it's sometimes kind o' lonely on the prairie
here alone,

When the night-time settles round you an' your
thoughts are all your own,

An' old faces flit before you like a flock o' homin'
birds,

An' your heart swells with emotion that no man can
put in words,

An' you ponder on the Why-for, the Beginnin', an'
the End ;

An' you know the only things worth while are Family
an' Friend—

From the trifles of existence your better judgment
weans,

An' you get the right perspective on the homestead—
in your jeans.

There are days the sweat-drops glisten on this sun-
burned hand of mine,

There are nights the joints go creakin' as I crawl to
bed, at nine,

But I hear the horses' stampin' and the rap of
Collie's tail,

An' it minds me of the Eighties an' the Old
Commission Trail—

Of the days we pledged our future to a land we
hardly knew,
An' the men whose brave beginnings made prosperity
for you ;
There are men now worth their millions I remember
in their 'teens,
An' they made their start by hustlin' on the home-
stead in their jeans.

There are times when most folks figure that their life
has been a blank ;
You may be a homeless hobo or director of a bank,
But the thought will catch you nappin'—catch you
sometime unawares—
That your life has been a failure, and that no one
really cares ;
That the world will roll without you till the Resurrec-
tion morn,
An' that no one would have missed you if you never
had been born ;
An' I give you my conclusion—all that livin' really
means
Is revealed to those who hustle on the homestead in
their jeans.

Some day I reckon I'll cash in an' file another claim
Where the wicked cease from troublin' an' the good
get in the game ;
Where the pews are not allotted by the fashion of
your dress,
An' the only thing that figures is inherent manliness—
Give me no silk-spangled horses an' no silver-plated
hearse,
But let some student preacher read a bit of Scripture
verse,
An' find a sunny hillside where the water-willow
screens,
An' plant me on the homestead where I hustled—in
my jeans.

THE HOMESTEADER

FAR away from the din of the city,
I dwell on the prairie alone,
With no one to praise or to pity,
And all the broad earth for my own ;
The fields to allure me to labour,
The shanty to shelter my sleep,
A league and a half to a neighbour—
And Collie to watch if I weep.

Yes, this is my place of probation,
Though woefully windy and bare ;
I am lord of my own habitation,
I mock at the meaning of care ;
For here, on the edge of creation,
Lies, far as the vision can fling,
A kingdom that's fit for a nation—
A kingdom—and I am the king !

The grasses aglare in the morning
With crystalline radiance shine ;

The dew-drops are jewels adorning,
Are jewels—and the jewels are mine ;
The heat of the sun when it shineth,
The wet of the wind when it rains,
Are balm to the heart that repineth—
The Medicine-men of the plains !

I follow the plough in the breaking,
I tap the rich treasures of Time—
The treasure is here for the taking,
And taking it isn't a crime ;
I ride on the rack or the reaper
To harvest the fruit of my hand,
And daily I know that the deeper
I'm rooting my soul in the land.

They say there is wealth in the doing,
That royal and rich are the gains,
But 't isn't the wealth I am wooing
So much as the life of the plains ;
For here in the latter-day morning,
Where Time to Eternity clings,
Midwife to a breed in the borning,
I behold the Beginnings of Things !

When, reckless of time and of trouble,
 I watch till the water-fowl comes,
 Or, picking my steps in the stubble,
 I steal where the prairie-hen drums ;
 When shooting the wolf in the brushes,
 Or spearing the pike in the stream,
 Or potting the crane in the rushes—
 Ambition seems only a dream.

When darkness envelops creation,
 And shadows lie deep on the plain,
 I sit in my rude habitation
 And ponder my childhood again ;
 Then voices come out of the distance,
 Far voices from over the sea,
 They call from the depths of existence—
 I know they are calling to me !

The voices of song and of motion,
 The voices of laughter and light,
 They're calling from over the ocean—
 Oh, God ! could I answer to-night !
 The voices of friend and of lover,
 The voices I knew in the past—
 I turn to my pallet to smother
 The thoughts that have found me at last !

.

*Greater than the measure of the heroes of renown,
He is building for the future, and no hand can hold
him down ;
Though they count him but a common man, he holds
the Outer Gate,
And posterity will own him as the father of the State.*

GOD'S SIGNALMAN

WELL, no, I'm not superstitious,—at least, I
don't call it that,—

But when some one spins a creepy yarn I don't deny
it flat,

For a man who spends a lifetime with the throttle in
his hand

Is bound to have adventures that he cannot under-
stand ;

I sometimes think our knowledge here is but a sorry
show,—

We're only on the borderland of what there is to
know.

I used to think a man could know all things that
could be known ;

That he should not acknowledge any power above his
own ;

That, however strange the circumstance, there always
is a cause

That is in complete obedience to some of Nature's
laws ;

But I couldn't shake conviction off, no matter how I
tried,

And I've changed my way of thinking since the
night that Willie died.

Yes, Willie was my little son—my greatest earthly
joy—

And wife and I just kind o' seemed to dote upon the
boy ;

When I was out on duty she would hover round the lad,
And treasure up his sayings to repeat them to his
dad ;

And every night, at lighting time, I knew that,
without fail,

His baby lips were praying for the man out on the
rail. . . .

Ah, well, for three short years we knew what such a
treasure is,

And we grew ever more attached to those sweet ways
of his ;

When one day, swinging through the gate, I saw
with blanching face,
My wife as pale as ashes, and a doctor in the
place. . . .

I tried to go in steady, but my knees were knocking
hard,
And the light went out of heaven as I staggered up
the yard.

The doctor was a friend of mine, with children of his
own,
But he didn't need to tell me, for a blind man would
have known
By the laboured, quick-caught breathing, and the
little burning brow,
That the Visitor was ready and was waiting for him
now.

We sat about his bedside in silent, deep despair,
And the years rolled down upon us as we faced each
other there.

'Twas a little before midnight when a ring came at
the bell,
And the call-boy said, 'Excuse me, sir, but I was
sent to tell

That Ninety-six is waiting, and there's no one else about.

They're expecting you to take her. If you don't she can't go out.'

I left the answer to my wife. With lips as white as snow,

She whispered, 'Do your duty,' and I said, 'All right, I'll go.'

My fireman knew my trouble, and in rough-and-ready way

He let me know his heart was feeling things he couldn't say ;

The night was dark and moonless, but the bright stars overhead

Seemed to whisper to each other, 'His little boy is dead.'

The very locomotive seemed to read my thoughts aright,

And the monster sobbed in sympathy as we bulleted the night.

We'd been running fast and steady till a little after two ;

All the passengers were fast asleep, except, perhaps, a few

Who sat a-swapping stories in the smoker, when a
sight

Met my eyes that fairly froze my blood in terror and
affright—

For there, before me, standing in the halo of the
light

Was a little child outlined against the blackness of
the night !

Oh, I could not be mistaken, I would know him
anywhere,

With his father's mouth and forehead, and his
mother's eyes and hair,

And little arms outstretched to me that seemed to
coax and say,

'Come, Daddy, come and kiss me, for I'm going far
away.'

I flung the brake and throttle, and amid the hissing
steam

The vision grew, and waned away, and vanished as a
dream !

My fireman was beside me : 'Your nerve is going,
Jack ;

Let's leave the engine here and take a walk along the
track.

The exercise will do you good.' I followed as he
led,

Until we reached the gorge about a hundred yards
ahead :

The night wind cooled my temples as we walked the
bridge upon,

Till we sudden stopped with a sudden gasp—

—THE CENTRE SPAN WAS GONE!

.
You may call it hallucination, as some of the others
do,

But I know that the Master took my boy that night
at half-past two ;

And the prayers of a hundred passengers had been
offered up in vain

Had his spirit, clad in his baby dress, not stood
before my train. . . .

I know I cried in my window-seat, and was otherwise
ill-behaved,

But the life that I lost was more to me than all the
lives he saved.

GOING HOME

THE village lights grew dim behind, the snow
lay vast and white,
And silent as an icy shroud spread out upon the
night ;
A wan moon struggled with the clouds, and through
the misty haze
The trails that branched to left and right were tangled
as a maze ;
The settler's horses plodded in the soft, uncertain
snow ;
And, stealing cautiously behind, a Thing moved to
and fro.

The trail was little travelled, and the pale, sad, sickly
light
Was hindrance, rather than a help, to read the road
aright ;

A dozen miles lay stretched between the settler and
his shack :

He thought of many things that night—not once of
turning back.

Above the crunching of the snow he heard the rising
wind,

But never looked—and never saw—the Thing that
stole behind.

The trail was lost ; the horses took their way across
the plain ;

The settler strove to hold the course, but strove, alas,
in vain ;

The fickle wind seemed scarce to stay a moment at a
place—

Now howling in a rear attack, now snapping at his
face ;

And, nearing, leering, peering, in the ghastly, ghostly
light,

The Thing came softly after as it followed in the
night.

A light ! a light ! a welcome light gleamed friendly
from afar :

Oh, can it be—it cannot be—'tis surely not a star ?

Nay, nay, it is more warm and near, a happy farmer's
home

That beckons to the wanderer, 'You need no longer
roam.'

With eager hope they hastened on, and plied across
the plain ;

As often as the horses fell they rose to plunge again.

The hours moved on, the miles moved on, they
followed as a dream

The waning light, the dying light, of that deceitful
gleam,

And when at last it seemed the place must almost be
in sight,

The light went out ! Oh, perfidy ! Oh, murderous,
mocking light !

'Twas well the ears grew deaf before the howling of
the wind,

Nor heard the ghoulish chuckle of the gloating Thing
behind.

The snow lay deep ; the horses floundered with the
heavy sleigh,

Till, plunging in a sudden drift, they tore the tongue
away ;

The sleepy driver knew it not, as through his nerveless hands

His hold on life was slipping with the frozen leather bands.

The night was calm and beautiful, the frost had ceased to smart. . . .

The Thing had leapt upon him and was tearing at his heart!

.

The room was warm and cosy, and the light was soft and low,

Her presence seemed to radiate a tender, girlish glow,
And when she placed her hand in his, the soft, caressing palm

Was cure for every trouble, and for every pain a balm :

And she whispered, 'Sweet, my sweetheart, I'll be faithful, I'll be true ;

In the springtime, in the springtime, I will cross the sea to you.' . . .

A little bed was fashioned in the fitful fire-light glow ;

A little boy was murmuring a prayer of long ago

And mother-hands upon his head, that fondled in his
hair,
And sense of quiet comfort and respite from every
care ;
And a pillow white and downy, and a bed so soft
and deep,
And tired lips were lispng, ' Now I lay me down to
sleep.' . . .

Again the scene was changed : A flood of mellow,
amber light,
That filled the soul with ecstasy of infinite delight ;
While crystal-cadenced music tinkled through the
yellow glow,
The lullabies of childhood and the songs of long
ago ;
The sea of God on every hand in silent silver
lay :
An atom fell : its circles spread through all eternity.

.

The Thing was gone ; its work was done ; a lump of
lifeless clay
Sat crouching, crouching, crouching in the dawning
of the day ;

The frozen eyeballs stared upon a wilderness of snow,
And peered into the future, to the Place no man may
know.

A she-wolf prowled about the spot and sniffed below
the sleigh,
And howled a melancholy howl, and slunk in fear
away.

JUST BE GLAD

FEELIN' kind of all run down?

Mighty bad :

Sick and tired o' life in town?

Don 't be sad :

What you 're needing isn't rest :

Square your shoulders, raise your chest ;

Pack your turkey ; go out West—

Just be glad !

Gone astray in No-Man's-Land ?

Silly lad !

Ought to have your carcass tanned

With a gad :

Should ha' kept the narrow track :

Never mind, you can 't go back ;

Things may not be quite so black—

Just be glad !

Gone and blown in all your cash
On a fad?

Livin' now on soup and hash?
Writin' Dad?

Don't you do it. Here's a tip;
Keep a good stiff upper lip;
Needn't fall because you slip—
Just be glad!

Friends refuse to help you out?
Don't get mad!

You would be a lazy lout
If they had.

Do not envy place or pelf;
Praise the Lord, you've got your health;
Dig in! Be a man yourself—
Just be glad!

All the world may say or do,
Good or bad,

Isn't anything to you—
Just be glad!

Though you work at book or trade,
Though you work with pen or spade,
Hump yourself—you'll make the grade—
Just be glad!

A PRAIRIE HEROINE

THEY were running out the try-lines, they were
staking out the grade ;
Through the hills they had to measure, through the
sloughs they had to wade ;
They were piercing unknown regions, they were
crossing nameless streams,
With the prairie for a pillow and the sky above their
dreams,
They were mapping unborn cities in the age-long
pregnant clay :
When they came upon a little mound across the
right-of-way.

There were violets growing on it, and a buttercup or
two,
That whispered of affection ever old and ever new,
And a little ring of white-washed stones, bright in
the summer sun,
But of marble slab or granite pile or pillar there was
none ;

And across the sleeping prairie lay a little, low-built
shack,
With a garden patch before it and a wheat-field at
its back.

‘ Well, boys, we’d better see him, and he hadn’t
ought to kick,
For we’ll give him time to move it if he does it pretty
quick.’

But scarcely had the foreman spoke when straight
across the farm

They saw the settler coming with a rifle on his arm ;
Some one ha’ hiked for cover but they had no place
to run,

But most of them decided they would stay and see
the fun.

The farmer was the first to speak : ‘ I hate to
interfere,

And mighty glad I am to see the railway comin’ near,
But before you drive your pickets across this piece
of land

You ought to hear the story, or you will not under-
stand :

It's the story of a girl who was as true as she was
brave,
And all that now remains of her is in that little
grave.

'I didn't want to bring her when I hit the trail out
West,
I knew I shouldn't do it, and I did my level best
To coax her not to come out for a year or two at
least,
But to stay and take it easy with her friends down in
the East ;
But while I coaxed and argued I was feeling mighty
glum,
And right down in my heart I kep' a-hopin' she
would come.

'Well, by rail and boat and saddle we got out here
at last,
A-livin' in the future, and forgettin' of the past ;
We built ourselves a little home, and in our work and
care
It seemed to me she always took what was the lion's
share ;

God knows just what she suffered, but she hid it
with a smile,
And made out that she thought I was the only thing
worth while.

‘She stood it through the summer and the warm,
brown days of fall,
And of all the voices calling her she would not hear
the call ;
But when the winter settled with its cold, white pall
of snow
She seemed to whiten with it, but she thought I
didn’t know ;
She tried to keep her spirits up and laugh my fears
away,
But I saw her growing thin and ever weaker day by
day.

‘ At last I couldn’t stand it any longer, so I said,
“ I think you’d better try and spend a day or two
in bed
While I go for a doctor. It’s only sixty miles.”
She gave a little wistful look, half hidden in her
smiles,

And said, "Perhaps you'd better, though I think I'll
be all right
When the spring comes." . . . Well, I started out
that night.

'I made the trip on horseback, by the guiding Polar
star,
And a dozen times the distance never seemed one-
half so far.
But the doctor had gone out of town,—just where, no
one could say,
And a lump rose in my chest that fairly took my
breath away.
But I daren't stay there thinking, and my search for
him was vain,
So I bought some wine and brandy and I started
home again.

'Forgetful of my horse, I spent the whole night on
the road,
Till early in the morning he collapsed beneath his
load;
I saw the brute was done for, and although it made
me cry,
I hacked into his jug'lar vein and left him there to die;

And then I shouldered the supplies and staggered on
alone,

And thinking of my wife's distress I quite forgot my
own.

'She must ha' watched all night for me, for in the
morning grey

She saw me stagger in the snow and fall beside the
way,

And God knows how she did it—she was only skin
and bone—

But she came out here and found me and dragged
me home alone,

And she took the precious liquor that had cost us all
so dear,

And poured it down this worthless hulk that's standin'
blattin' here. . . .

'I guess you know what happened—I lived, she
passed away ;

I robed her in her wedding dress and laid her in the
clay ;

And every spring I plant the flowers that grow upon
her grave,

For I hold the spot as sacred as the Arimathæan's
cave ;

And when the winter snows have come, and all is
white and still,
I spread a blanket on the mound to keep out frost
and chill.

‘Folks say I’ve got a screw loose, that I’ve gone to
acting queer,
But I sometimes hear her speaking, and I know she’s
always near ;
And sometimes in the night I feel the pressure of her
hand,
And for a blessed hour I share with her the Promised
Land :—
Let man or devil undertake to desecrate my dead
And as sure as God’s in heaven I will pump him full
of lead.’

They were rough-and-ready railway men who stood
about the spot,
They were men that lied and gambled, they were
men that drank and fought,
But some of them were sneezing and some were
coughing bad,
And some were blowing noses on anything they had ;

And some of them were swallowing at lumps that
shouldn't come,
And some were swearing softly, and some were
simply dumb.

At last the foreman found his voice: 'I guess your
claim is sound;
I wouldn't care to run a track across that piece of
ground. . . .
We'll have to change our lay-out . . . but I hope
. . . we have the grace
To build a fitting monument to mark that holy
place;
Put me down for a hundred; now, boys, how much
for you?'
And they answered in a chorus, 'We'll see the
business through.'

.

The passengers upon a certain railway o'er the
plain
See a shining shaft of marble from the windows of
the train,

But they do not know the story of the girl-wife in the
snow

And the broken-hearted farmer with his lonely life of
woe,

And none of them have guessed that the deflection in
the line

Is the railway-builders' tribute to a prairie heroine.

THE SEER

I N the dingy dust of his deerskin tent sat the chief
of a dying race,
And the lake that lapt at his wigwam door threw
back a frowning face,
And a sightless squaw at the centre-pole crooned
low in a hybrid speech,
When a man of God swept round the point and
landed on the beach.

The heavy eyes grew bright with fire, the lips shaped
to a sneer—

‘Welcome, my paleface brother, what good news
brings you here?

Are you come with the voice of healing, with the book
of your blameless breed,

To soothe my soul with comfort while my body
gnaws with need?

‘ Welcome, O paleface brother ; come, what have you
to fear ?

Mayhap the redskin chieftain can teach as well as
hear ;

And while we sing your sacred songs and breathe
your mystic prayer,

Who knows what inspiration may come on the
ev’ning air ? . . .

‘ Listen ; you are a scholar, schooled in the pale-face
lore :

’Tis said a dying saint may sometimes see the shining
shore ;

That closing eyes peer far beyond the realm of mortal
sight,—

Who knows but that a dying race may read the road
aright ?

‘ A dying race ! We know it ; the land is ours no
more,

No more we roam the prairies as in the days of yore ;
The brave, free spirit that was ours is crushed and
passed away,

And bodies without spirits are predestined to decay.

‘No matter. In the summertime the flowers bloom
in the grass,
The startled insects flood the fields and chirrup as
you pass,
The birds sing in the bushes ; but before the wintry
blast
The flowers and the insects and the little birds are
past.

‘Yet once again the spring will come, the flowers
will bloom again,
And insects chirrup blithely where the former ones
are lain ;
The white snows of the winter-time will vanish in the
heat,
And outdoor life and colour will follow their defeat.

‘Can the paleface read the riddle? Has he eyes to
see the signs?
Or thinketh he that snow will lie forever on the
pines?
That housed-up life can triumph for the mastery of
state,
Or cushioned chairs produce a race destined to
dominate?

‘Behold, the things your hands have done, the
power your arts have won—
Behold, those things shall vanish as the snow before
the sun ;
The snow that smothered out the red—ah, hear it if
you can—
Shall leave the earth as suddenly, *and leave it brown
and tan.*

‘Hear ye a little lesson—surely ye know its worth—
Only an outdoor nation can be master of the
earth ;
Soon as ye seek your couches, soft with the spoils of
trade—
See well to your outer trenches before the mines are
laid !

‘Hear ye a little lesson—can ye the truth divine?
Milk ye may mix with water, and water will mix with
wine ;
Mix as ye may on your prairies, mix in your hope
and toil,
But know in all your mixing that water won’t mix
with oil !’

In the dingy dusk of his deerskin tent sat the chief
of a dying race,

And the glow of holy prophecy lit up his rugged face,
And the foremost light of the setting sun fell far on
an eastern land,—

*And who shall save the paleface if he will not under-
stand?*

THE SON OF MARQUIS NODDLE

HE is brand-new out from England, and he
thinks he knows it all—

(There's a bloomin' bit o' goggle in his eye);

The 'colonial' that crosses him is going to get a fall—

(There's a seven-pound revolver on his thigh).

He's a son of Marquis Noddle, he's a nephew of an
earl,

In the social swim of England he's got 'em all
awhirl,

He's as confident as Cæsar and as pretty as a girl—

Oh, he's out in deadly earnest, do or die.

They will spot him in the cities by the cowhide on
his feet—

(They were built for crushing cobble-stones at
'ome),

And the giddy girls will giggle when they see him on
the street—

(There's a brand-new cowboy hat upon his dome).

He has come from home and kindred to the land
 beyond the sea,
 To the far-famed land of plenty, to the country of
 the free,
 But he can't forget he owns it from Cape Race to
 Behring Sea—
 He is coming just as Cæsar would to Rome.

When his pile is getting slender he'll go looking for
 a job
 (And he thinks he ought to get it, don'tcher-
 know),
 But he finds that he must mingle with the common
 city mob
 (How *can* they think that he would stoop so
 low?).
 So he hikes him to the country, where the rustics
 will be proud
 To salute him when they meet him, and to whisper,
 nice and loud,
 'He's the son of Marquis Noddle,—you would
 know him in a crowd'—
 They will pay him there the homage that they
 owe.

In the little country village he will manufacture
mirth—

(For it's there they take the measure of a
swell);

They will soon proceed to teach him that he doesn't
own the earth

(With a quit-claim on the sun and moon as
well).

They will show him that the country isn't altogether
slow,

And that they can travel any pace that he's a mind
to go;

He will be a right good fellow till they run him out
of dough—

Oh, it is a tale of merriment they tell!

So to keep his bones together he goes working on a
farm

(Where they get up at a little after two),

Where they think to take him down a peg will not
do any harm

(And they sleep when there is nothing else to
do).

Where they work him like a nigger nearly twenty
 hours a day,
 And they don't disguise the fact that they consider
 him a jay,
 And he eats so much and sleeps so much he isn't
 worth his pay—
 Oh, it doesn't matter that his blood is blue.

He decides to do a season as a cowboy in the West
 (Where they call a man a boy until he's dead),
 And he tries to walk a-swagger with a military chest
 (And he isn't overslept or overfed).
 They will set him breaking bronchos, though it's
 little to his mind ;
 With many new-learned epithets he'll perforate the
 wind—
 How can he know the boys have stuck a thistle on
 behind ?
 He will end the exhibition on his head.

They will fill him full of liquor that 'll frizzle his inside
 (In the cooler he can square it with his God).
 He will spend his nights in places where the *demi-*
monde reside
 (In the morning he 'll be minus watch and wad).

'They'll abuse him as a youngster, they will mock
him as a man,
They'll make his life a thorny path in every way
they can,
Till he curses his existence and the day that it began,
And he wishes he was rotting in the sod.

He will write long tales to England, tales of bitterness
and woe

(They will print 'em in the papers over there).

He will tell them pretty nearly everything he doesn't
know

(And they'll take it all for gospel over there).

He will tell them that the country isn't fit for
gentlemen,

That any who escape from it do not come back again,
He is handy with his language and he wields a bitter
pen—

To the truth of each assertion he would swear.

He's a growler, he's a growser, he's a nuisance, he's
a bum

(And the country hasn't any room for such),

And they class him in the papers as 'European scum'
(They would rather have the Irish or the Dutch).

He's the butt of every jester, he's the mark of every
joke,

He is wearing borrowed trousers—he has put his
own in soak—

He's a useless good-for-nothing, beaten, buffeted,
and broke,

And of sympathy he won't get overmuch.

.

In a dozen years you'll find him with a section of his
own

(He had to learn his lesson at the start),

With a happy wife and children he is trying to atone—

(For he loves the country now with all his heart).

He's a son of dear old England, he's a hero, he's a
brick ;

He's the kind you may annihilate but you can never
lick,

For he played and lost, and played and lost, and
stayed and took the trick ;

In a world of men he'll play a manly part.

THE PRODIGALS

KNEE-DEEP our prairies link the seas,
Flood-full our voiceless rivers wend ;
We hold unturned the larder keys
On which the future years depend :
And shall we suffer alien throngs
Usurp the land to us belongs ?

What though we are to fortune born
And all our paths are paved with gold ?
We flaunt our folly up to scorn,
Because we keep not what we hold :
Why should we rob our right of birth
To foster all the breeds of earth ?

We picture with unfeigned dismay
Man-glutted lands of other flags,
They multiply but to decay,
And rot in pestilence and rags ;
Why hasten we to emulate
These helpless tragedies of Fate ?

The land our children's sons will need,
That land we have wide open thrown
To heathen knaves of other breed
And paunchy pirates of our own :
We give away earth's greatest prize,
And pat ourselves, and call us wise.

No father he who to the slums
For husband to his child would send,
And no one worthy of her comes,
She lives a maiden to the end :
Yet we have placed our virgin trust
In spawn of Continental lust.

If dumb we be to Reason's cries—
Our children's cause she pleads in vain—
Our outraged sons at length will rise
And seize their heritage again ;
And fools, who prate of vested right,
Will either cease to prate—or fight.

The land is ours, the land will keep,
And Time is nowise near its end ;
We hold our birthright all too cheap
Its sacredness to comprehend ;
In after years our sons will say,
' Why frittered ye the land away ? '

THE SQUAD OF ONE

SERGEANT BLUE of the Mounted Police was
a so-so kind of a guy ;
He swore a bit, and he lied a bit, and he boozed a
bit on the sly ;
But he held the post at Snake Creek Bend for
country and home and God,
And he cursed the first and forgot the rest—which
wasn't the least bit odd.

Now the life of the North-West Mounted Police
breeds an all-round kind of man ;
A man who can jug a down-South thug when he
rushes the red-eye can ;
A man who can pray with a dying bum or break up
a range stampede—
Such are the men of the Mounted Police and such
are the men they breed.

The snow lay deep at the Snake Creek post and
deep to east and west,
And the Sergeant had made his ten-league beat and
settled down to rest
In his two-by-four that they called a 'post,' where
the flag flew overhead,
And he took a look at his monthly mail, and this is
the note he read :

'To Sergeant Blue of the Mounted Police at the
post of Snake Creek Bend,
From U.S. Marshal of County Blank, greetings to
you, my friend,
They's a team of toughs give us the slip, though they
shot up a couple of blokes,
And we reckon they's hid in Snake Creek Gulch and
posin' as farmer folks.

'They's as full of sin as a barrel of booze and as
quick as a cat with a gun,
So if you happen to hit their trail be first to start the
fun ;

And send out your strongest squad of men and round
them up if you can,
For dead or alive we want them here. Yours truly,
Jack M'Mann.'

And Sergeant Blue sat back and smiled, 'Ho, here
is a chance of game !
Folks 'round here have been so good that life is
getting tame ;
I know the lie of Snake Creek Gulch—where I used
to set my traps—
I'll blow out there to-morrow and I'll bring them in
—perhaps.'

Next morning Sergeant Blue, arrayed in farmer
smock and jeans,
In a jumper sleigh he had made himself set out for
the evergreens
That grow on the bank of Snake Creek Gulch by a
homestead shack he knew,
And a smoke curled up from the chimney-pipe to
welcome Sergeant Blue.

‘Aha, and that looks good to me,’ said the Sergeant
to the smoke,
‘For the lad that owns this homestead shack is East
in his wedding-yoke ;
There are strangers here, and I’ll bet a farm against
a horn of booze
That they are the bums that are predestined to
dangle in a noose.’

So he drove his horse to the shanty door and
hollered a loud ‘Good-day,’
And a couple of men with fighting-irons came out
beside the sleigh,
And the Sergeant said, ‘I’m a stranger here, and
I’ve driven a weary mile ;
If you don’t object I’ll just sit down by the stove in
the shack awhile.’

So the Sergeant sat and smoked and talked of the
home he had left down East,
And the cold, and the snow, and the price of land,
and the life of man and beast,

But all of a sudden he broke it off with, 'Neighbours,
take a nip?

There's a horn of the best you'll find out there in
my jumper, in the grip.'

So one of the two went out for it, and as soon as he
closed the door

The other one staggered back as he gazed up the
nose of a forty-four,

But the Sergeant wasted no words with him, 'Now,
fellow, you're on the rocks,

And a noise as loud as a mouse from you and they'll
take you out in a box.'

So he fastened the bracelets to his wrists and his legs
with some binder-thread,

And he took his knife and he took his gun and he
rolled him on to the bed ;

And then as number two came in he said, 'If you
want to live,

Put up your dukes and behave yourself or I'll make
you into a sieve.'

And when he had coupled them each to each, and
laid them out on the bed,

'It's cold, and I guess we'd better eat before we go,'
he said.

So he fried some pork and he warmed some beans,
and he set out the best he saw,

And they ate thereof, and he paid for it, according
to British law.

That night in the post sat Sergeant Blue with paper
and pen in hand,

And this is the word he wrote and signed and mailed
to a foreign land :

'To U.S. Marshal of County Blank, greetings I give
to you ;

My squad has just brought in your men, and the
squad was Sergeant Blue.'

*There are things unguessed, there are tales untold, in
the life of the great lone land,*

*But here is a fact that the prairie-bred alone may
understand,*

*That a thousand miles in the fastnesses the fear of the
law obtains,*

*And the pioneers of justice were the 'Riders of the
Plains.'*

ALKALI HALL

WHEN Lord Landseeker came out West to
have a look around,
And spend a little money if the right thing could be
found,
He hadn't breathed the prairie air more than a day
or two
Until he was the centre of a philanthropic crew
Who sought to show His Lordship all the short-cuts
to success
(Though why they should have troubled, His
Lordship couldn't guess,
For each was losing money, as he candidly confest,
Which seemed to be a fashion with the dealers in the
West).

Thus His Lordship grew suspicious that his 'friends'
would turn him down,
And he quietly bought a ticket to a little country
town ;

But he didn't know the message that was flashed
along the wire

To a simple country dealer in the land of his desire ;
And it read : ' Look out for Goggles, he'll be with
you this a.m. '

And the crowd around the station—well, he merely
smiled to them,

And thought it jolly decent they'd assemble, don't-
cherknow,

And file along behind him as they followed, in a row.

The snow had fallen softly all the calm November
night,

And the morning found the prairies with a covering
of white ;

But His Lordship took a citizen who ' happened ' in
his way,

And they drove into the country for the most part of
the day,

Until they reached a section that was flat and free
from stone,

And the citizen remarked about a fellow he had
known

Who offered thirty dollars for this section in the fall,
But the owner wanted forty, or he wouldn't sell at all.

Then His Lordship drove across it, and it seemed to
catch his eye,
And he whispered to the driver, 'That's the section
I will buy';
So in town they found the owner, who was very loath
to sell,
But he finally consented, if His Lordship wouldn't
tell
That the price was forty dollars by the acre; this
agreed,
A lawyer drew the papers and His Lordship got the
deed,
And he sailed across the ocean with the satisfying
thought
That he'd followed his own judgment in the bargain
he had bought.

The winter snows had vanished and the spring was
growing late,
When Lord Landseeker came again to view his real
estate,
And he drove out in a buggy to where his section lay,
And his heart was very happy as he smoked along
the way

Till the section burst upon them, and he scarce
believed his sight,

For the land lay in the sunshine, flashing back a
snowy white. . . .

And His Lordship stooped and felt it, and he heaved
a little sigh,

As the knowledge dawned upon him that his land
was—*alkali!*

His Lordship did some thinking as they journeyed
back to town,

And his wonted happy features were o'ershadowed
with a frown ;

But he neither crawled nor blustered, neither bluffed
nor swore nor kicked,

(For the men from little England never know when
they are licked),

But he advertised for tenders for construction on the
land,

And the buildings he erected were the best he could
command ;

With a hundred rooms for students, and quarters for
the staff,

And the workman often wondered what made His
Lordship laugh !

In the papers of Old England there appeared a little
ad,
For the benefit of parents whose sons were going
bad ;
'Teach your boys the art of farming in the great
Canadian West ;
Our instruction is unrivalled, our curriculum the best ;
There 's a grate in every chamber and a bath in every
hall,
And a full dress-suited dinner every ev'ning, free to
all ;
There is tennis, polo, marksmanship, and half the
day in bed,
And we make them into farmers for a hundred
pounds a head.'

.

His Lordship's college prospers and is crowded to
the doors
With 'students' playing poker while the 'servants'
do the chores ;
What they do not know of farming they make up in
other lines,
They are judges of tobacco and connoisseurs of
wines ;

They are experts at the races and at sundry other
games—

Though they couldn't tell the breeching of the
harness from the hames—

Though they're far from home and kindred they
occasion no alarm,

*That was what their parents wanted when they sent
them out to farm.*

PRAIRIE BORN

WE have heard the night wind howling as we
lay alone in bed ;
We have heard the grey goose honking as he
journeyed overhead ;
We have smelt the smoke-wraith flying in the hot
October wind,
And have fought the fiery demon that came roaring
down behind ;
We have seen the spent snow sifting through the key-
hole of the door,
And the frost-line crawling, crawling, like a snake,
along the floor ;
We have felt the storm-fiend wrestle with the rafters
in his might,
And the baffled blizzard shrieking through the turmoil
of the night.

We have felt the April breezes warm along the plashy
plains ;
We have mind-marked to the cadence of the falling
April rains ;

We have heard the crash of water where the snow-
fed rivers run,
Seen a thousand silver lakelets lying shining in the
sun ;
We have known the resurrection of the Springtime in
the land,
Heard the voice of Nature calling and the words of
her command,
Felt the thrill of springtime twilight and the vague,
unfashioned thought
That the season's birthday musters from the hopes
we had forgot.

We have heard the cattle lowing in the silent summer
nights ;
We have smelt the smudge-fire fragrance—we have
seen the smudge-fire lights—
We have heard the wild duck grumbling to his mate
along the bank ;
Heard the thirsty horses snorting in the stream from
which they drank ;
Heard the voice of Youth and Laughter in the long,
slow-gloaming night ;
Seen the arched electric splendour of the Great North's
livid light ;

Read the reason of existence—felt the touch that was
divine—

And in eyes that glowed responsive saw the End of
God's design.

We have smelt the curing wheat-fields and the scent
of new-mown hay ;

We have heard the binders clatter through the dusty
autumn day ;

We have seen the golden stubble gleaming through
the misty rain ;

We have seen the plow-streaks widen as they turned
it down again ;

We have heard the threshers humming in the cool
September night ;

We have seen their dark procession by the straw-
piles' eerie light ;

We have heard the freight-trains groaning, slipping,
grinding, on the rail,

And the idle trace-chains jingle as they jogged along
the trail.

We have felt the cold of winter—cursed by those who
know it not—

We have braved the blizzard's vengeance, dared its
most deceptive plot ;

We have learned that hardy races grow from hardy
circumstance,
And we face a dozen dangers to attend a country
dance ;
Though our means are nothing lavish we have always
time for play,
And our social life commences at the closing of the
day ;
We have time for thought and culture, time for
friendliness and friend,
And we catch a broader vision as our aspirations
blend.

We have hopes to others foreign, aims they cannot
understand,
We, the 'heirs of all the ages,' we, the first-fruits of
the land ;
Though we think with fond affection of the shores
our fathers knew,
And we honour all our brothers—for a brother's
heart is true—
Though we stand with them for progress, peace, and
unity, and power,
Though we die with them, if need be, in our nation's
darkest hour—

Still the prairies call us, call us, when all other voices
fail,
And the call we knew in childhood is the call that
must prevail.

'A COLONIAL'

(In some circles the term 'colonial' is still allowed to imply inferiority and dependence.)

ONLY a Colonial!

Only a man of nerve and heart
Who has spurned the ease of the life 'at
home,'
Only a man who would play his part
In a new breed-birth on a distant loam ;
Only a man of sense and worth
Who is not afraid of the ends of earth.

Only a Colonial!

Only a man who has cornered Fate
And matched his strength with the Unattained ;
Only the guard at the Outer Gate,
Who holds for you what he has gained,
That your children, seized of a better sense,
May share with him Toil's recompense.

Only a Colonial !

Only a man who has bridged the deep,
 And stained the map a British hue,
 Who builds an Empire while ye sleep
 And deeds the ownership to you.
 'Tis the Viking blood which gave you birth
 That has driven him to the ends of earth.

Only a Colonial !

Wherever the flag that ye think is great
 Is flown to the farthest winds that blow,
 Wherever the colonists ye berate
 In their blind faith-vision onward go,
 Ye may find ye hearts that are British still—
 In your self-conceit do ye count them nil?

Only a Colonial !

Rough as the bark of his forest tree
 His ways may seem to the fat and sleek,
 But ye owe your Empire to such as he,
 Though the hoar-frost glisten on his cheek ;
 He has carried your flag where ye dared not go,
 And little ye reck of the debt ye owe.

Only a Colonial !

No doubt he is raw on your social laws
And grates on your sense of caste and creed,
But he lives too near to Facts and Cause
To study heraldry and breed ;
And, knowing man in his primal state,
He scorns the claims of the social great.

Only a Colonial !

The name in cheap contempt ye fling,
Is not the whim of birth or chance,
We well ignore the flippant sting,
Or charge it to your ignorance ;
The colonist, and sons of his,
Have made the Empire what it is.

LITTLE TIM TROTTER

LITTLE Tim Trotter was born in the West,
Where the prairie lies sunny and brown ;
Never was, surely, so welcome a guest
In the stateliest halls of the town ;
For Little Tim Trotter was thoughtful and brave,
And a lover of summer and shower,
And Little Tim Trotter took less than he gave,
To the hearts that were under his power.

Little Tim Trotter would play in the sun,
Or lie in the buffalo grass,
And in fancy he saw the wild buffalo run
And the brave-riding Indians pass ;
And with eyes that were deep as the infinite blue
He would picture himself at their head,
For no one so young as this hunter-man knew
That the herds and the riders were dead.

Little Tim Trotter would lie in his bed

While the fire-light played low on the floor,
And strange were the thoughts that in Little Tim's
head

Played low like the fire at the door ;
The hopes that were his, and the wonders he knew,
And the yearning he had in his heart,

With the glimmering light of the future in view,
And little Tim just at the start !

Little Tim Trotter has heard the long call

And has answered with joy and surprise,
And the thoughts and the things that are hid from us
all

To-day are revealed to his eyes ;
And he rides in the van of his buffalo herd,
Or in camp with his Indians brave ;
But Little Tim Trotter speaks never a word
Through the mound of a little green grave.

THE OLD GUARD

KNEW you the men of the Old Guard? Men
of the camp and trail ;
Guard of the van when Time began in the land of
grass and gale,
Of a sky-wide land they seized command where the
mightiest prevail.

Who were the men of the Old Guard? Giants of
strength and will,
Trained in the school of hard-luck rule and daring to
die or kill ;
Staking their lives, and their young, and wives, on
the road up Fortune's hill.

Whence were the men of the Old Guard? Heroes
of '82 ;
From swamp and ledge and ocean's edge they came
to see and do,
And they failed at first, and the land they cursed,
but they stayed and struggled through.

Hope of the men of the Old Guard? Little but
hope was theirs ;
With empty hand in an untried land they clutched
at wheat and tares,
And home at night by the wood-fire light was answer
to their prayers.

Way of the men of the Old Guard? What of their
end and way?
You may find their bones by the lime-white
stones where the sun-dried sleugh-holes
lay,
For the Goddess Trade is a costly jade, and they
were the ones to pay.

Joy of the men of the Old Guard? The joy of the
brave and true ;
With joy they paced where Death grimaced and his
icy vapours blew,
And with steady tread they bore their dead with the
faith of the chosen few.

What of the men of the Old Guard? Ask of the
 arching skies,
The grass that waves on their leafy graves is lisp-
 ing their lullabies,
And the lives they spent are their monument and
 their title to Paradise.

KID M'CANN

WHERE the farthest foothills flatten to a
circle-sweeping plain,
And the cattle lands surrender to the onward march
of grain,
Where the prairies stretch unbroken to the corners
of the sky,
And the foremost wheat-fields rustle in the warm
winds droning by—
There a crippled cow-boy batches in the haunts of
old-time herds,
And the balance of the story is repeated in his
words:—

So you never heard how I lost my leg and hobble
now on a crutch?
So far as the story relates to me it can't concern you
much,

For it's really the story of Kid M'Cann and the
price that a girl will pay
For the fellow she sets her fancy on, as only a woman
may ;
It isn't every girl who proves her faithfulness in flames,
But fellows who listen with moistened eyes speak
softly of other names.

Ned M'Cann owned the Double Star 'way back in
the early days ;
He had come out here with a sickly wife and a kid
he hoped to raise
Where the climate suited the feeble-lunged, but life
was scarce at its brim,
Till a little mound by a prairie hill held half of the
world for him ;
And his double love would have spoiled the child
had she been like me or you,
But her only thought was for her dad and the mother
she scarcely knew.

'Course, she was bred to the ranges, and before she
had reached her 'teens
She could straddle a nag with the best of us and ride
in her smock and jeans

Till we all caved in, and she thought it fun to camp
with a round-up bunch,
And she shared her pillow and shared our sky and
shared our pipe and lunch,
And all of us mad in love with her, but she was only
a kid,
And she never dreamt what our feelings were, or the
love-struck things we did.

But even girls grow older, and, though always kind
and sweet,
There came a day when she realised that we were at
her feet,
But I had never spoken, nor any one in the camp,
When in came a foreign puncher, a thoroughbred
black-leg scamp,
And we who had known her since childhood saw, in
our unbelieving eyes,
This wily sinner setting himself to carry off the prize.

Of course it couldn't be stood for, and little as I
might like,
It fell to my lot to intimate to him it was time to
hike,

Which I did in straightforward manner, in a way to
be understood,
And he looked at me with a sulky scowl that boded
none of us good ;
But he did as he was ordered, to be absent before
night,
And we lost his form in the shadowy East as he
cantered out of sight.

Next day, as I rode on my cayuse, apart from the
rest of the gang,
I felt a sudden rip in my leg like the jab of a red-hot
tang ;
And my horse went down below me, with my leg
crushed in the clay,
And over me leered that fiendish face, and he grinned,
and rode away ;
Rode away to the eastward,—I saw him fade in the sky,
And crushed and pinned from hip to heel I counted
the hours to die.

How long I lay I could never tell, for the hours were
days to me,
Till struck with sudden terror I tore at my wounded
knee,

For the east wind carried a smoky smell, and I read
in its fiery breath
That half a mile of sun-dried grass was all between
me and death ;
With my hunting-knife I hacked my leg, but I
couldn't cut the bone,
So I set myself as best I could to face my fate alone.

The fire came on like a hungry fiend on the wings of
the rising wind,
And I wouldn't care to tell you all the things that
were in my mind ;
I saw the sun through the swirling smoke, and the
blue sky far above,
And I bade good-bye to the things of earth and the
dearer hopes of love ;
And I figured that I had closed accounts for life's
uncertain span,
When a smoke-blind broncho galloped up and there
sat Kid M'Cann !

There wasn't much time for talking, with the death-
roll in our ears,
But we sometimes live in seconds more than we
could in a thousand years,

And before I could guess her meaning she had
 thrown herself on my face,
And spread her leather jacket, which her warm hands
 held in place ;
I felt her breath in my nostrils and her finger-tips in
 my hair,
And through the roar of the burning grass I fancied
 I heard a prayer.

'Twas but for a moment ; the flames were gone ; un-
 harm'd they had pass'd me by ;
God knows why the useless are spared to live while
 the faithful are call'd to die,
But the form that had sheltered me shiver'd, and
 seem'd to shrivel away,
And when I had rais'd it clear of my face I look'd
 into lifeless clay. . . .
And darkness fell, and the world was black, and the
 last of my reason fled,
And when I came to myself again I was back at the
 ranch, in bed.

That was back in the eighties, and still I am living
 here ;
I built this shanty on the spot ; her grave is lying near ;

And when at nights my nostrils sense the smoke-smell
in the air,
I seem to feel her form again, and hear again her
prayer ;
And then the darkness settles down and wild night-
creatures cry,
But stars come out in heaven and there 's comfort in
the sky.

WHO OWNS THE LAND?

WHO owns the land?

The Duke replied,
 ‘I own the land. My fathers died
 In winning it from foreign hands,
 They paid in red blood for their lands ;
 Their swarthy *villeins* bit the dust
 In founding the Landowners’ Trust ;
 And many generations dead
 Substantiate what I have said,
 The land belongs to us because
 We’ve had the making of the laws.’

Who owns the land?

The Common Man
 Said, ‘Government adopts a plan
 By which the land is held in fee
 For common folks, like you an’ me.
 The man who’d alter it’s a crank ;
 I got the transfer—in the bank—
 I’ve little time to think about
 These theories silly fellows shout,

I have to work to beat the band
To pay the mortgage on the land.'

Who owns the land?

The Statesman said,
'The land supplies our daily bread,
And raises wheat, and corn, and oats,
And simple husbandmen—and votes—
The land was won at awful cost
And many soldiers' lives were lost.
Too bad! They're mostly silly boys
Who go to battle for the noise.
Here's a quotation I admire:
"The people's voice is God's desire,"
And as I rule by right divine,
I half suspect the land is mine.'

Who owns the land?

The Farmer said,
'What puts that question in yer head?
I own it. Tuk a homestead here
An' lived on it for twenty year;
I bet a new ten dollar bill
That I could hold it down until

I got the patent, an' I won ;
 The land is mine, as sure 's a gun ;
 When city blokes come here to shoot,
 You bet, they get the icy boot !
 But 't made me mighty mad when that
 Danged railway come across the flat
 An' cut my homestead plumb in two.
 But there I wuz—what could I do ?
 But just set down, resigned to fate,
 Fer fear that they 'd expropriate.'

Who owns the land ?

The Speculator

Said, ' Land is just an incubator
 In which to let your dollars hatch
 And, some fine morning—sell the batch.'

Who owns the land ?

The Indian Chief

Said, ' Ugh, the white man mucha thief !
 He steal my lan' because he 's strong
 (By gar, it take him pretty long),
 He steal my lan', an' call it law,
 He turn me out, me an' my squaw ;

He let us die, because we not
 Like him, can live in one same spot ;
 He talk so much of civilise—
 He 's civil—sometimes—an' he lies !'

Who owns the land ?

The Over-Rich

Said, ' All these people claim to, which
 Is satisfactory to me,
 So long as they cannot agree.
 Let them arrange it as they will
 As long as some one pays the bill.
 The present plan is, surely, fine ;
The interest, at least, is mine.'

Who owns the land ?

In meek surprise

The child said, ' Like the air, and skies,
 And running water, flowers, and birds,
 And lullabies, and gentle words,
 And rosy sunsets, clouds, and storms,
 And God revealed in all His forms—
 'Tis plain the land 's the right of birth
 Of every creature on the earth :
*No man can make a grain of sand ;
 How can he say he owns the land ?'*

A RACE FOR LIFE

(As related for the benefit of the New Arrival.)

YES, stranger, I hev trailed the West
Since I was a kid on a bob-tailed nag,
I hev known the old land at its best,
An' packed most ev'ry kind of jag ;
I hev rode fer life frum a prairie fire,
An' tramped fer life through a snow blockade ;
I hev crumpled 'bad men' by the quire,
But only once hev I been afraid.

I hev lain alone while the red-men crep'
Aroun' me in their fightin'-paint ;
I hev soothed the widow while she wep'
Because I'd made her man a saint ;
I hev lassoed lobsters frum the East,
Till ev'ry j'int in their system shook,
An' I'd never run frum man or beast
Until I run frum a chinook.

The chinook had his lair in Crow's Nest Pass,
An' he foraged aroun' the Porcupine Hills,
But he'd loafed so long that the ranchin' grass
Had a wool-white cover frum the chills ;
An' me, like a chap that wuz not afraid
Of anything with hide an' hair,
Went out in a sleigh to the hills an' stayed
Till the old chinook might find me there.

At last, when I thought I had tempted fate
Enough fer a man with a past like mine,
I hitched the bronks an' struck a gait
Along the slopes of the Porcupine ;
An' the day wuz as cold as the Polar Sea,
With a nip as keen as a she-wolf fang ;
But frost wuz just like food to me,
An' boldly over the fields I sang :

*' I am the man frum the Hole in the Hills,
Where the Great G. Whiliken capers 'round ;
I am the gent that pays the bills
When they plant a greenhorn in the ground ;
I am the Finish of folks that think
They can run a bluff on the prairie-bred,*

*Fer I give their vitals a fatal kink
When I open up with a shower of lead.'*

An' the cold bit into my nose an' chin,
An' drilled itself to the marrow-bone ;
My face wuz drawn in a frozen grin,
An' my fingers rattled like lumps of stone ;
But my heart wuz as brave as an outlaw stag,
An' I laughed though the frost cut like a knife ;
Till sudden I felt the hind bob drag,
An' I knew I wuz in fer a race fer life.

Out frum his lair the sly chinook
Had hunted me with his fatal breath ;
I dared not turn aroun' to look,
Fer to strand on the hillside there wuz death ;
The hot wind sizzled along my back,
An' the sweat stood out on my shoulder-blade,
So I yelled at the team through the frozen crack
The roll of the tongue in my mouth had made—

'Get out o' here ; by the Polar Star,
The fiend of the South is on your heels !'
An' I felt the old sleigh cringe an' jar,
An' fer once I prayed—fer a pair o' wheels ;

But the sleigh stood still as the hind bob stuck
 In mud that rolled to the bolster-rail ;
 So I slipped the tongue an' cursed my luck
 As I straddled a bronk an' hit the trail.

Well, we beat it out by half a neck,
 But the broncho's tail was scorched a sight,
 An' I wuz a blistered, parboiled wreck,
 An' nearly dead o' heat an' fright ;
 An' I squatted down in a shady spot
 An' fanned myself with a wisp o' hay,
 An' the boys on the lower ranches thought
 They heard a voice in the chinook say :

*' I am the dope that was made to feed,
 To fresh down-Easters just come out ;
 They'll swallow it all in their greenhorn greed,
 An' send it home beyond a doubt ;
 I am the caricature an' bluff
 That is part of the play of the Western men'—*
 What's that? You say you've had enough?
 Well, pass it on to your neighbour, then.

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